FIRE DEPARTMENT ACCREDITATION

Executive Leadership

Fire Department Accreditation: Worthwhile Exercise or Unnecessary Expense?

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that the appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions or writings of another.

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ABSTRACT

The problem was that the Anne Arundel County Fire Department senior level management staff could not decide whether accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International was worth the time and effort to pursue. The purpose of this research was to describe the accreditation process, as well as, identify the cost and benefits associated with this process. Research questions included:

1.   What is the accreditation process through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International?

2.   What are the benefits associated with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process?

3.   What are the costs associated with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process?

4.   What were the difficulties other accredited fire service agencies have experienced during the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process?

Descriptive research including: a survey, an interview, and data analysis were utilized to identify these issues. The recommendations revealed that the benefits of the accreditation process outweigh the cost and difficulties associated with the process and that a consideration should be given to completing the process in the future.

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Fire Accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International

Today, citizens are more involved in their communities than ever before. They are well versed in the democratic process, want accountability from their leaders, and expect government at all levels to provide efficient, cost effective programs and services. To that end, many jurisdictions have been forced to compete for limited funds as a result of decreasing revenue streams and voter imposed tax caps.

As a result, elected officials and fire chiefs alike have all been forced to do more with less. Many of them are reluctant to make critical decisions and provide additional funding unless it can be demonstrated that the additional funding will be used to enhance new or existing programs within the community (CFAI, 2006).   Many local and state governments have begun to implement different appraisal and evaluation systems to specify funding priorities, as well as, ensure accountability and the delivery of quality services for a particular agency (CFAI, 2006).

There are many different organizations that publish criteria and standards that can be used to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of a fire department. The Insurance Services Office (ISO) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) both provide specific criteria and standards for a fire department to measure itself against. However, these criteria are very limited; since, they both focus primarily on firefighting and fire prevention related activities. Thus, excluding from assessment other valuable non-firefighting programs and services provided by a fire department.

The Center for Public Safety Excellence's Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) offers a comprehensive and all-inclusive self assessment program that measures all aspects of a modern fire department. The CFAI fire accreditation process includes:

a self-assessment module, the development of an accreditation manual, and peer review/inspection. The CFAI program is a continuous process that requires an agency to constantly strive for excellence even after accreditation has been achieved, as well as, participate in a re-accreditation process on a periodic basis. This type of all inclusive program appears like it would fit the needs of the Anne Arundel County Fire Department who, is interested in implementing/participating in an evaluation program to determine if they are providing adequate, safe, and efficient, services to its citizens.

The research problem is that the Anne Arundel County Fire Department's senior level management staff could not decide whether accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International was worth the time and effort to pursue. The purpose of this research was to describe the accreditation process, as well as, identify the costs, benefits, and difficulties associated with this process. Research questions included: What is the accreditation process through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International? What are the benefits associated with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process? What are the costs associated with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process? What are the difficulties other accredited fire service agencies have experienced during the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process?

The researcher will investigate other fire departments nationally who have participated in the CFAI process to examine the potential value to the AAFD and the citizens of Anne Arundel County. Information gained as a result of this process will be used to assist the AAFD senior level management staff with the decision about participation in this type of evaluation process. The researcher will carry out this investigation through the utilization of the descriptive research

method, as outlined in Module 2 of the National Fire Academy's *Executive Development Course Self-Study Guide* (NFA, 2004). Through this process the researcher will attempt to attain information about the CFAI fire accreditation process and expostulate how these findings will affect the decision of the AAFD to participate in such a process.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Administrators and managers alike know that to ensure success, programs must be evaluated to measure results and attain an intended goal. Whether public or private, all businesses must include an evaluation program as a key part of any management strategy. This is very important in the fire service; since, many modern departments are continuing to take on additional responsibilities at a time when funding and staffing are shrinking. Without an evaluation process, fire chiefs would not know whether they are providing effective services and meeting the needs of their community (Compton & Granito, 2002).

Anne Arundel County, Maryland is a unique and diverse community covering more than 419 square miles. Anne Arundel County is located in the Baltimore/Washington corridor and is bordered on its east side by the Chesapeake Bay. The County encompasses over 534 miles of shoreline and contains urban, suburban, and rural areas. The county's infrastructure includes: an international airport, military base, military academy, sports stadium, industrial areas, a state capital, major interstate highways, and numerous other federal/state agencies. Although very distinct, Anne Arundel County is primarily a residential bedroom community with a population that exceeds 512,000.

The Anne Arundel County Fire Department (AAFD) is an all hazards response organization that provides emergency medical, fire suppression, technical rescue, fire inspection,

fire investigation, public education, hazardous materials, emergency response communications,

training, and emergency management functions from 32 fire stations and 4 support facilities.

The department has an annual operating budget of $95.8 million, and is staffed by a

combination of more than 1300 career and volunteer personnel who responded to over 77,000

calls last year (AAFD, 2007).

The problem of the AAFD not participating in a formal evaluation process has led to

missed appropriations and the lack of a coordinated planning process within the department.

Some of the most difficult challenges facing a fire service leader are the justification of

resources, providing a coordinated sense of direction, and ensuring a credible and professional

organization (Jobusch, 2007). West (2006) reported that accreditation is a method that has been

proven to measure community risks and accurately assess an organization's performance. Evans

(2001) reported that many elected and appointed officials struggle to make accurate assessments

of services in their communities, and that the accreditation process is something that city/county

managers and government agencies alike take comfort in. In fact, achieving accreditation

confirms the need for standard processes that define the capabilities of emergency service

organizations, as well as, assures that an adequate level of quality and uniformity are achieved

(Moore, 2005).

The issue of the AAFD not participating in a formal evaluation process has been an

ongoing problem that directly affects the department's mission and increases the likelihood that

revenue sources, as well as, the deployment of limited resources will be misdirected. The

absence of such a planning tool to gage the effectiveness of the AAFD also affects other county

agencies such as: the budget office, planning and zoning departments, and the local elected

officials who are all responsible for providing funding for services and master planning within the county.

Over the years, the Anne Arundel County Fire Department has attempted to correct this deficiency. In 1998, then, Fire Chief Stephen Halford, had directed that the AAFD participate in the CFAI fire accreditation process. Soon after this directive, the AAFD had become an accredited agency through the CFAI. Chief Halford left the department in 1999 and a new Chief was appointed. In 2004, when re-accreditation was scheduled to take place the sitting Fire Chief and senior level staff had decided that the accreditation process was too cumbersome, expensive, and offered little benefit for the department.

Since 1999, there has been a tremendous rate of turnover within our department as a result of attrition. During this time period, we have had four fire chiefs and virtually every member of our senior level staff has been replaced. However, the crux that the CFAI fire accreditation process was just a waste of time and money is a belief that has taken hold within the culture of the department.

In December 2006, Deputy Chief David Stokes was appointed as the new chief of the AAFD. Shortly after his appointment, Chief Stokes developed goals for the organization which included an evaluation of our department's services to ensure that we were meeting the needs of the community. In November 2007, an ISO review was begun within the department and is currently underway. The review is expected to be completed in July, 2008. Recognizing that an ISO review primarily focuses on firefighting resources, Chief Stokes has also directed that research into the CFAI fire accreditation process also be conducted to investigate the costs and benefits of this all inclusive assessment and evaluation process.

There is also the potential for this problem to become even more crucial in the near future. The County's General Development Plan projections forecast that Anne Arundel County will see continued development resulting in an additional 42,000 dwelling units and an additional 67,000 residents by the year 2035 as a result of continued growth, an aging population, and the impact of the Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommendations (AACO, 2007).   Ms. Margaret Kaii-Ziegler, Planner/Demographer for the Anne Arundel County Government has advised that the trends in the County's population growth has shown that three-quarters of all new residents will be children and grandchildren of existing residents with the most significant change occurring in the age 65 and older age group; which, is expected to rise (Ms. Margaret Kaii-Ziegler, personal communication, February 8, 2008). This continued growth coupled with an increase in request for services, as well as, the need for additional staffing, funding, equipment, and infrastructure requirements without proper planning and justification is a recipe for disaster.

The problem of the AAFD not participating in an all inclusive evaluation program to measure if the department is meeting the needs of the community directly relates to the United States Fire Administration's Operational Objectives: to promote within communities a comprehensive, multi-hazard risk reduction plan led by the fire service organization; and to respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues (National Fire Academy [NFA], 2004). In addition, the ability to gather/evaluate information, to plan effectively, and ensure goal attainment directly relates to the objectives in the Using Feedback Unit, of the National Fire Academy's *Executive Leadership Course*, as well as, the mission statement of the Anne Arundel County Fire Department, where members are sworn to eliminate threats to life and property

through research, education, professionalism, and the application of new technologies (AAFD, 2005).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review was organized around the four specific research questions being explored. The first question was: Describe what is the accreditation process through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International? The review revealed that the CFAI fire accreditation process was a comprehensive all-inclusive evaluation process that fire departments can utilize to measure the productivity of their organization. The accreditation process was established in the late 1980's when members of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the International City/County Managers Association (ICMA) came together to develop an assessment process for fire departments to achieve excellence and professionalism within their organization (Brugeman & Coleman, 1997). Through a memorandum of agreement between the two agencies, a task force was created consisting of fire chiefs, city/county administrators, and academic professionals who worked to create the accreditation process (CFAI, 2008). In 2001, the CFAI was incorporated into a standalone organization with IAFC and ICMA representatives who serve on the board of directors and oversee the accreditation process (West, 2006).

According to the frequently asked questions section of the CFAI website, the accreditation process consists of four major levels: registered agency, applicant agency, accreditation candidate, and accredited department. The fire accreditation process begins when a department applies for registered agency status by completing a registry application and paying an application fee. The registered agency status is valid for three years and entitles registered

agencies to access the CFAI network, receive the CFAI newsletter, as well as, a copy of the

latest edition of the *Fire & Emergency Services Self-Assessment Manual*. In addition, the fire

department must appoint an accreditation manager as a point of contact. The accreditation

manager must also attend and complete CFAI accreditation workshops before being eligible to

progress to the next level in the CFAI accreditation process.

The next phase in the process is becoming an applicant agency. This occurs after the

accreditation manager and other members of a department have completed their training and

become familiar with the requirements of accreditation. During this phase, the applicant agency

will receive an applicant agency packet that consists of all the materials needed to pursue

accreditation including: access to CFAI staff, technical assistance, and other network agencies.

The agency will be required to complete a self-assessment process and other related documents

which can take anywhere from 1-3 years. Applicant agency status is good for 18 months and

requires that an agency fee be payed at the time of application. The fee is based on the

population (latest census) that the particular applicant agency currently serves at the time of

application. This is normally a one time fee; however, it can be reassessed in those agencies that

allow their status to lapse.

The third phase in the process is becoming an accreditation candidate. During this phase the

accreditation candidate agency must submit their completed self assessment, risk analysis, and

strategic plan to the CFAI for review. It is during this phase that the peer review consisting of a

team of 3-5 people from outside the state conduct an on-site assessment. The review normally

takes about a week and involves an examination of water systems, fire inspections, training records,

emergency dispatch procedures, apparatus maintenance records, budget, and other related

departmental records. At the completion of the peer review, the team will submit a final report to

the CFAI recommending agency accreditation or requiring that additional work be completed

before receiving accreditation status. There are no fees for this phase of the process; however, the

hosting agency is responsible for the peer assessment teams expenses during the site visit which

usually consist of: food, travel, and lodging expenses. The CFAI recommends that agencies

undergoing a peer review budget about $1,500 per person for this process.

The fourth and final phase of the accreditation process is when an organization gains

accredited agency status. This occurs when the organization's peer report is reviewed by the

peer team leader at a regularly scheduled commission meeting which, are held twice annually.

Once accredited, an agency must pay an annual maintenance fee of 1/5 of the agency's

application fee and complete annual compliance reports. At the end of the five year

accreditation period, and within 45 days of the agency's accreditation anniversary the agency

must apply for re-accreditation and submit to an onsite peer review or risk losing their accredited

agency status. In summary, the literature review affirmed that the CFAI accreditation process

was an all encompassing evaluation designed to measure an organizations capabilities, develop

long range plans to address deficiencies, and promote excellence within their organization.

The second research question asked the researcher to identify the benefits associated with

the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process. The review verified

that there were many benefits associated with the CFAI accreditation process. The CFAI (2006),

in the 7th edition of *Fire & Emergency Services Self Assessment Manual* lists the following as

direct benefits of the accreditation process: the promotion of excellence; quality improvement

through self assessment; improved organizational performance; a detailed evaluation of a

department and its services; identification of strengths and weaknesses; a methodology for

addressing deficiencies; providing growth; improved communications; a system of internal

recognition; a mechanism for developing departmental documents; and the fostering of pride in

an organization.

A review of other literature was also very productive in determining what others have

defined as the benefits of accreditation. One of the biggest benefits of accreditation is that the

process can help define and determine the level of service within an organization. Wilmoth

(2007), in an editorial for *Fire Chief Magazine* advised that two of the biggest benefits a

department can derive from the CFAI accreditation process are improvements in the quality of

an agency and the enhancement of services that they deliver. The accreditation process also

provides an opportunity for departments to establish both baseline and benchmark information;

which, translates into the establishment of an acceptable level of service that a department is

capable of providing (Compton & Granito, 2002). Jones (2005), said that CFAI accreditation is

key if an organization is to successfully assess and establish credible service levels.

Another benefit of accreditation is improved communication to an organization's internal

and external customers. King (2000), in an applied research project for the National Fire

Academy cited improved communications and relations as a result of the accreditation process

that was completed within his organization. Buckman (2006), reported that the accreditation

process helps a department communicate to community members and elected officials that their

department is well organized and capable of meeting their needs. The CFAI (2006), reported that

accreditation can help provide a forum for management and leadership philosophies to be

communicated within an organization. Piercy (2005), in applied research project for the National

Fire Academy cited improved organizational communications as a major benefit of the fire

accreditation process.

Another benefit of the accreditation process is planning. Kazmierzak (2003), in an

applied research project for the National Fire Academy described how accreditation benefits fire

service organizations with the development of both long term and strategic plans. In fact, the

development of an accreditation manual and the required planning documents during the

accreditation process is especially important when transition occurs within a department

(Coleman, 2004). DeChant (2007), in an article for *Fire Chief Magazine,* described how the

Glendale, Arizona Fire Department successfully utilized the accreditation process to complete a

master planning process within their community. Without an adequate planning process, fire

departments risk a decline in the quality of adequate services; especially, in fast growing

communities where there is a significant amount of development (McLaughlin, 2004). Fleger

(2004), spoke about how the planning process is inter-woven within the accreditation process

and the need for every emergency service organization to participate in this process to ensure

critical funding.

Accreditation is also very prevalent and has been used successfully in many other

professional organizations/disciplines. Mays (2004), suggested that accreditation programs

instituted in the health care field have had positive effects on the operations of the organizations

that have participated in these processes. Potter (2006), in a presentation for the Joint

Commission International cited accreditation as a way to improve the quality of health care,

reduce health care costs, and establish proven principles to help govern health care

organizations. Accreditation has also been used to assist numerous law enforcement agencies to

promote excellence and prevent problems within their organizations. Oxley (2006), reported that

accreditation is key if law enforcement agencies are to meet nationally accepted standards and

prevent litigation in their organizations. Emergency managers also utilize an accreditation

program to ensure quality operations during a disaster. Lucas (2006), reported that the

Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) has been adopted by numerous

emergency management agencies to ensure accountability and adherence to recognized standards

in the emergency management field. In summary, the literature review revealed that there were

many benefits associated with the accreditation process in the fire service, as well as, other

service delivery organizations.

The third research question asked the researcher to identify the costs associated with the

Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process. The review revealed

that there were numerous fees associated with the CFAI fire accreditation process. According to

the frequently asked questions section of the CFAI website, accreditation fees are assessed

accordingly; depending, on the phase of the process in which the organization is actively

participating.

In the first phase of the CFAI accreditation process or the registered agency phase, all

agencies are required to pay a $350 registration fee at the time of application. The second phase

or applicant agency stage of the accreditation process also has fees. During this phase agencies

must pay an accreditation fee ranging from $2,500-$10,000 depending on the size of the

population that an agency serves. This fee is assessed based on the latest census data for the

jurisdictional boundaries that the agency serves. In the third phase or the accreditation candidate

stage of the process, there are no applicant or agency fees that must be paid to the CFAI.

However, an agency is responsible for covering the expenses of the 3-5 person peer review team

that conducts the on-site assessment. The CFAI estimates these expenses usually range between

$1,000-$1,500 a person and usually cost a hosting agency approximately $6,000 (CFAI, 2007).

In addition, there is another $1,000-$1,500 that must be applied to cover the team leader's travel

expenses to the annual CFAI meeting where he or she will present your agency's case for

accreditation (Jensen, 2005). During the forth and last accreditation stage or the accredited

department phase, each department is responsible for paying an annual accreditation fee of 1/5

($500-$2,000) their accreditation fee that was paid in the second phase of the process.

Furthermore, each agency must again pay for the expenses of a 3-5 person peer review team that

conducts the on-site peer re-accreditation visit which normally costs $1,000-$1,500 a person.

In addition to the direct costs listed by the CFAI for the accreditation process, there are

also some indirect cost associated with the fire accreditation process. One of the indirect cost is

the training workshop fees. During the first phase or registered agency phase there is a

requirement that an agency appoint an accreditation manager who must complete an

accreditation training workshop. Currently, the cost to complete this workshop is approximately

$625 per person plus travel expenses (CFAI, 2007). A second indirect cost is the salaries and

supplies needed to complete the accreditation process. Piercy (2005), reported that fire

departments should consider the costs of salaried employees taken away from their normal

assignments to work on accreditation, as well as, the cost of office supplies that will be needed to

complete this process. In summary, the literature review revealed that there are numerous direct

and indirect costs associated with the CFAI accreditation process and that these costs should be

considered by any department who is thinking about embarking on such a process.

The fourth research question was: Identify what difficulties other accredited fire service agencies have experienced during the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process? The literature revealed that many departments have suffered difficulties in the pursuit of accreditation.   Purcell (2005), in an applied research project for the National Fire Academy reported that the time to complete the accreditation process was a disadvantage to the process and that his department invested more than 600 hours of staff time on the project. The CFAI (2006), proclaimed that the accreditation process was a significant investment in time/resources and estimated that approximately 700-1000 staff hours would be required to complete the process. The Sedwick County Kansas Fire District reported that the completion of the CFAI accreditation process in their department resulted in a substantial commitment of resources that lasted nearly two and a half years (SCFD,2008). Binaski (2006), in an applied research project for the National Fire Academy reported that fire departments who lack an understanding of the accreditation process; including, the costs and time commitment that is required will have great difficulty with this type of program.

Other difficulties that many departments experience during the accreditation process are the planning and standards of coverage components. Jones (2007), reported that a number of fire departments have experienced problems completing the self assessment and planning portions of the process; which, delineate legal responsibilities and deployment capabilities. Jones (2007), went on to say that departments involved in the accreditation process must be willing to measure and deliver an acceptable service level equal to that of the risks that are assessed during the process. Bruening and Weber (2001), recommend that fire departments learn all that they can about accreditation to help minimize the difficulties they may experience during the accreditation

process. In summary, the results of literature review affirmed that there was a significant amount of information to support the CFAI accreditation process. It also revealed that this is a comprehensive evaluation program that contains substantial benefits, costs, and time commitments associated with the process.

PROCEDURES

The research for this project was accomplished in three steps. The first step began with an analysis of relevant literature to answer the four research questions. This review began at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center (LRC) in Emmitsburg, Maryland, in November 2007. Web searches of the LRC card catalog were completed utilizing key words such as: accreditation, fire accreditation, fire department evaluations, and fire department standards. After a review of the literature obtained from the LRC, additional expanded web searches were completed employing the key words: fire accreditation benefits, fire accreditation costs, fire accreditation challenges, and fire accreditation difficulties utilizing the search engines google, google scholar, and yahoo. Specific web sites of the NFPA, CFAI, DOD, and the Anne Arundel County Government were also used to research applicable codes, regulations, laws, standards, and other related documents. A review of fire service and other related texts relevant to the four research questions was also accomplished through the use of the department's reference library located at the Anne Arundel County Fire Department's Training and Research Facility.   A limitation noted in this step of the process was the lack of information specific to the fire department accreditation process. Although there were numerous information sources regarding accreditation available, much of the information focused on accreditation for other professions such as: law enforcement and the health care field.

The second step in the process involved the utilization of a survey. The guide for

"Conducting Surveys" as outlined in Module 3 of the National Fire Academy's *Executive*

Development Course Self-Study Guide was used as a reference for this process (NFA, 2004).

The survey for this research project was developed after the completion of the literature review

to ensure that information revealed during this process could be used in the design of the survey

instrument. The survey in this process was developed to obtain information from the 121

EMS/Fire/Rescue Department's who were currently accredited through the CFAI at the time of

this project. The departments chosen to participate in this survey were selected from the CFAI's

web site of accredited departments. This option was chosen so that a broad spectrum of various

different size and type departments could be sampled. The survey solicited information to the

following questions:

1. Does your department/jurisdiction (County/Municipality) currently hold
   accreditation certification through the Commission on Fire Accreditation
   International?

2. How long has your department been accredited through the Commission on Fire
   Accreditation International?

3. How long did it take your agency to become accredited after becoming a
   registered agency through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International?

4. How many people were involved/assigned to complete the accreditation process
   on a full time basis?

5. What was the estimated number of staff hours that were devoted to the
   accreditation process?

6.   What was the total estimated cost (not including member salaries) that your

department incurred to complete the accreditation process through the

Commission on Fire Accreditation International?

7.   Who initiated the accreditation process within your department?

8.   Were all of the appointed and elected officials in your community supportive of

your participation in the accreditation process?

9.   Are other agencies in your jurisdiction (County/Municipality) accredited?

10.   What benefits has your department seen as a result of achieving accreditation

through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International?

11.   What difficulties did your department experience with the Commission on Fire

Accreditation International's accreditation process?

12.   Would you recommend that all fire departments work toward achieving

accreditation?

13.   Do you have any additional comments regarding fire department accreditation?

The surveys for this process were sent to the Fire Chiefs in each of the participating

departments via U.S. Mail and included a self addressed stamped return envelope. A blank

sample survey form can be found in Appendix A. Departments who had not returned the survey

by the required deadline were contacted by phone and an attempt was made to complete a survey

at that time to ensure that a valid sample size was provided. A limitation noted during this step

of the research was that only accredited departments were surveyed for this project. Had a more

inclusive survey of all fire departments who have ever attempted CFAI accreditation been

completed a different result may have been produced. A second limitation noted during this step

was the number of respondents that participated in the survey. Only 88 of the 121 or 73% of the

departments surveyed responded to the survey within the allotted time frame.

The third step in this process was an interview. The guide for "Conducting Personal

Interviews" as outlined in Module 3 of the National Fire Academy's *Executive Development*

Course Self-Study Guide was used as a reference for the interview (NFA, 2004). A questionnaire

was developed after the completion of the literature review to ensure that information revealed

during that process could be used in the design of the instrument. The interview was conducted to

describe the accreditation process, as well as, the cost, benefits, and difficulties that were

experienced by departments that had completed the CFAI fire accreditation process.

The interview for this research was conducted with Chief Ernst R. Piercy, the

accreditation manager for the Air Force Academy Fire and Emergency Services Department

located in Colorado. Chief Piercy was selected for the interview based on his first hand

experience with the CFAI fire accreditation process. On February 25, 2008, the researcher

contacted Chief Piercy and provided him with background information relating to his request.

Chief Piercy agreed to the researcher's request for an interview and a date and time was

established for a phone interview.

Chief Piercy has been involved with the fire service for more than 29 years. Chief Piercy

currently is the Chief of the Air Force Academy Fire and Emergency Services Department, a

graduate of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program, and an author of

numerous articles and research papers on the CFAI fire accreditation process. Chief Piercy

possesses an Associates degree in Fire Science and is completing his Bachelors degree in a

related field. Chief Piercy is also a board member and vice chairman of the Commission on Fire

Accreditation International's Accreditation Commission. A questionnaire was developed for the

interview and an email was sent to Chief Piercy with information relating to the data that the

author was requesting. A phone interview with Chief Piercy was conducted on February 27,

2008.

The questionnaire used in the interview contained the following questions:

1.   How long have you been involved in the CFAI fire accreditation process?

2.   Can you describe the CFAI fire accreditation process?

3.   In your experience, does the fire accreditation process always follow the

       established steps that are published by the CFAI?

4.   Did the accreditation process in your department or any department that you were

       involved with differ in any way from the description provided by the CFAI?

5.   What were some of the indirect costs that you had noted as a result of the fire

       accreditation process?

6.   What is the average total staff hours that must be devoted to complete the CFAI

       fire accreditation process?

The researcher reviewed the questionnaire with the interviewee and utilized a pen and

pad of paper to record additional information that was deemed relevant during the interview

process.   A sample blank questionnaire can be found in Appendix B. A limitation noted during

this step of the research process was that there may have been other subject matter experts within

the fire service/local governments that the researcher was not aware of.

RESULTS

Through the use of descriptive research the researcher was able to obtain a significant

amount of information to answer the four research questions. The first question was: Describe

the accreditation process through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International?

Information gained from the literature review, as well as, an interview with Chief Ernst Piercy,

from the Air Force Academy Fire and Emergency Services Department was utilized to provide

relevant information regarding this question.

The CFAI fire accreditation process is a four step all inclusive process designed to

complete a detailed evaluation of an agency's services and promote excellence within an

organization (CAFI, 2007). The process is divided into four phases and begins when an

organization registers with the CFAI, receives a copy of the self assessment manual, and

appoints an accreditation manager (West, 2006). The second phase of the process begins when

an organization applies to become an applicant agency. During this phase the agency receives an

applicant agency packet and completes a strategic plan, risk analysis, and self assessment (CFAI,

2007).   The third step in the process is the accreditation candidate phase. This step begins when

an agency submits their risk assessment, strategic plan, and self assessment to the CFAI for

review and an onsite peer assessment is conducted (CFAI, 2007). The fourth and final step of

the process is the accredited agency status phase. This occurs when the peer review team

leader's report is reviewed at the annual accreditation commission meeting and an agency is

awarded accreditation (CFAI, 2007).

During my interview with Chief Ernst Piercy, he was asked if he could provide an

overview of the CFAI fire accreditation process. Chief Piercy described the process as a four

step program that begins with an organization making application to the CFAI and becoming an

applicant agency. He described the four phases in a similar fashion depicted by the CFAI and

summed up the process by saying that "the accreditation process is a comprehensive

management process that allows fire departments to be studied and improved using nationally

accepted practices for fire service agencies." Chief Piercy advised that the different steps in the

process are designed to allow for the creation of a management plan for improvement; which, is

then followed by an onsite inspection to validate the processes and ensure that the agency's

customer expectations for the emergency services delivery are being met. When asked in his

experience, if the accreditation process and its phases prescribed by the CFAI have ever been

deviated from he answered no. Chief Piercy described the CFAI fire accreditation process as a

structured process that is intended to meet the goals of the program. Chief Piercy stated that new

versions of the program have been developed over the years and that they incorporate best

practices, as well as, lessons learned from earlier processes. He also advised that there are

specific actions that must be completed in each phase of the process and that deviation from the

specific portions of the program is not appropriate for this type of process.

A nationwide fire department survey was conducted to answer the second research

question that asked the researcher to: Identify the benefits associated with the Commission on

Fire Accreditation International's fire accreditation process. The results of the survey revealed

that there were numerous benefits associated with the CFAI accreditation process. Of the 88

departments who reported that they currently were accredited through the CFAI, 90% of them

cited that the number one benefit of CFAI accreditation was that it provided a detailed evaluation

of their department's services. This was followed by: the development of a strategic plan (80%);

improved departmental management (65%); improved departmental efficiency (65%); increased

public support (51%); improved resource allocation (48%); improved response times (36%); and

increased funding (28%). It is important to note that only 2% of the departments that were

surveyed reported that there was no noticeable difference or benefit after completing the CFAI

fire accreditation process.

In addition, when asked who initiated the CFAI fire accreditation process within their

department, an overwhelming number of respondents (84%) reported that the process was

initiated by their fire chief.   Another 8% of the respondents reported that their City

Manager/Chief Administrative Officer initiated the process in their jurisdiction. This was

followed by: County Executive/Mayor (7%); and the City/County Council (1%). Ninety-four

percent of the respondents reported that all appointed and elected officials were supportive of

their participation in the accreditation process. Moreover, 65% of the respondents reported that

there were other agencies within their jurisdictions that were accredited in their respective

discipline. When the respondents were asked if they would recommend accreditation for other

fire departments, 84% of them reported that they would recommend this program for other fire

departments.

The third research question asked respondents to identify the costs associated with the

Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process.   A nationwide fire

department survey, information from the literature review, as well as, an interview with a key

member of the fire service were conducted to provide information regarding this research

question. The research revealed that there are numerous fees associated with the CFAI fire

accreditation process. These fees are assessed depending on the size of the population that is

served by an agency, as well as, the phase of the accreditation process that an agency is currently

operating under. The CFAI web site listed the cost and phases of the accreditation process where

 fees were assessed. In the first phase of the accreditation process a $350 application fee is imposed when an agency makes application to become a registered agency with the CFAI. In the second or applicant agency phase of the process, an agency is required to pay a $2,500-$10,000 accreditation fee which is based on the population that the organization serves.

During the third or accreditation candidate phase of the process, an agency is responsible for the peer review teams expenses for the on-site visit which cost an estimated $1,000-$1,500 per person. In addition, the agency is also responsible for the travel expenses of the peer review team leader and their department's accreditation manager who will be attending the accreditation commission meeting where the peer review report for the particular report will be read. The costs for these fees are between $1,000-1,500 depending on the location of the commission meeting. There are also fees that must be paid during the fourth or accredited department phase of the process. These fees are the annual accreditation fee; which is 1/5 ($500-$2,000) of the accreditation fee that was paid during the applicant agency phase. In addition, expenses for the on-site peer review will again be reassessed when the agency completes re-accreditation at the end of their five year accreditation period costing the agency another $1,000-$1,500 per 3-5 person team.

During a national fire department survey, the departments were asked what were the estimated costs (excluding salaries) for their department to complete the CFAI fire accreditation process. The survey revealed that 36% of the accredited departments spent between $5000-$7,500 to become accredited. This was followed by: $7,500-$10,000 (20%); $2,500–$5,000 (18%); over $10,000 (17%); and 0-$2,500 (7%). When asked how many personnel worked on the accreditation process full time, 47% of the respondents advised that only one person was

assigned on a full time basis to complete the process. This was followed by: four or more

personnel (39%); two personnel (13%); and three personnel (2%). When asked how long it took

the departments to complete the accreditation process, 34% stated that it took more than 2000

hours to complete the program. This was followed by: 1,500 hours (30%); 1000 hours (26%);

and 500 hours (9%). When asked how long their department was accredited, 38% stated that

they had only been accredited between 2-5 years. This was followed by: 6-7 years (26%); 8 or

more years (20%); and 0-2 years (15%).

During an interview with Chief Ernst Piercy of the Air Force Academy Fire and

Emergency Services Department, he was asked about costs associated with the CFAI fire

accreditation process. Chief Piercy advised that there are specific costs involved with the

process and that they are assessed in different phases of the accreditation process. When asked if

these cost ever deviated from the scheduled provided by the CFAI Chief Piercy stated "no."

When asked if there were other additional costs or indirect costs associated with the

accreditation process Chief Piercy stated "yes." One indirect cost that he mentioned was the

personnel cost to complete the process. Chief Piercy stated that the cost of personnel assigned to

complete the accreditation project should always be considered by an organization. He advised

that his experience with the accreditation process has revealed that the average time to complete

the process is about 1500 hours. When asked if there were other indirect cost associated with

accreditation other than personnel costs Chief Piercy stated yes. He pointed out that there are

also cost for office supplies and other miscellaneous materials that would be needed to complete

the program, and that these costs would vary depending on department size.

The fourth research question asked the researcher to identify what difficulties other

accredited fire service agencies have experienced during the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process? A nationwide survey of accredited fire departments was utilized to answer this question. The survey revealed that there was a substantial amount of departments that experienced difficulties while completing the CFAI fire accreditation process. In fact, 44% of the respondents advised that they had problems with some part of the accreditation process such as: the standards of cover; peer review process or planning components of the program.   24% of the survey respondents stated that funding for the program was a problem within their departments.

Another 15% of the survey respondents reported that the lack of support for the accreditation program from within their department and/or their appointed and elected officials caused them difficulties during their accreditation process. This was followed by 10% of the survey respondents who reported that a lack of staffing to complete the process was a problem within their organization.

DISCUSSION

The literature review and study results confirmed that the CFAI fire accreditation process is an all encompassing evaluation program designed to evaluate fire service agencies. West (2006) reported that accreditation should be undertaken by a fire service organization whenever a department is coping with change, evaluating organizational effectiveness, has a change in leadership or is seeking to raise the level of professionalism within their organization. Likewise, Wilmoth (2007), reported that the CFAI fire accreditation process helps fire departments improve the quality of their organization, as well as, enhance its service delivery capabilities. Jones (2007), reported that the accreditation will help a chief fire officer answer three questions: 1) Is

the organization effective? 2) Is the mission of the organization being achieved? And 3) what are

the reasons for the success of the organization?

Support of the CFAI fire accreditation process is also an important concept. Research

has revealed that many fire chiefs, as well as, other elected and appointed officials

overwhelmingly support this concept. West (2006), reported that the CFAI fire accreditation

process was a joint venture developed by the ICMA and the IAFC in the late 1980's. In fact, the

CFAI (2006), reported many local and state governments have begun to implement different

appraisal/evaluation systems to specify funding priorities to ensure accountability and the

delivery of quality services for a particular agencies. Jones (2001), reported that many

jurisdictions struggle to make accurate assessments of the impact an agency has on a community

and that accreditation was a concept that most appointed/elected officials and government

agencies alike find to be an acceptable practice.

Likewise, the results of a nationwide survey revealed that 94% of the elected and

appointed officials in those jurisdictions that were accredited were supportive of the fire

department participating in the CFAI process. The nationwide survey also revealed that in 16%

of the jurisdictions, an elected and/or appointed official initiated the accreditation process.   In

addition, the results of the nationwide survey also revealed that 65% reported other agencies

within their jurisdiction had also achieved accreditation in their respective field.

The research also affirmed that there were many benefits associated with the CFAI Fire

accreditation process. A nationwide survey of accredited departments revealed that 90% of

those surveyed cited a detailed evaluation of a departments's services as the number one benefit

of accreditation. The CFAI (2006), cited that a detailed evaluation of a department's services

allows an organization to determine what level of service a department is delivering and provides

a means in which service can be measured to determine if it is acceptable to their customers.

Similarly, Wilmoth (2007), reported that a detailed evaluation of an agency's services through

the CFAI self assessment can improve an organizations service delivery capabilities. Compton

& Granito (2002), reported that a evaluation of a department's services allows an organization to

establish baseline and benchmark information to improve service delivery capabilities.

Although the CFAI fire accreditation process is a proven to provide a detailed evaluation

of a department's services, there are also many other benefits associated with the process. A

nationwide survey of accredited departments revealed that 80% cited the development of a

strategic plan as a major benefit of the accreditation process. The information gained in the

literature review supported these findings. Kazmierak (2003), reported that the development of

strategic and long term plans during the accreditation process has benefitted many fire service

organizations. Likewise, Fleger (2004), spoke about the how the planning process was

contained within the accreditation process and the importance of participation to ensure

justification of different initiatives and critical funding within an organization. In fact, some

departments reported that the accreditation process directly affected planning in their

departments. Dechant (2007), cited that the Glendale Arizona Fire Department utilized the

accreditation process to complete the master planning process within their community. Others

have reported that departments could be at a significant risk of losing funding and other

resources by not having a planning process. (McLaugghlin, 2006), reported that without proper

planning, an organization may be at risk of losing funding and/or specific services that they are

currently delivering.

The benefits of accreditation in other service professions is also worthy of discussion. A nationwide survey of accredited fire service organizations has revealed that numerous other agencies and organizations within the accredited fire service agency's jurisdiction were also accredited in their respective field. Mays (2004), reported that accreditation in the health care industry has benefitted the operations of many different health care organizations who have implemented this type of evaluation system to improve operations. Potter (2006), cited reduced health care costs and organizational efficiency as a result of accreditation in the health care industry. Similarly, Oxley (2006), cited accreditation as a key to reducing litigation in many law enforcement agencies.   Emergency management professionals have also utilized accreditation to ensure accountability and standardization within many emergency management agencies (Lucas, 2006).

The cost associated with the CFAI fire accreditation process is also an interesting topic. A nationwide survey of accredited fire departments revealed that the costs to complete the accreditation process was in concert with the established fee schedule established by the CFAI. However, an interview with Chief Ernst Piercy, a key fire service professional and CFAI Commission member revealed that their were some indirect costs associated with the accreditation process and that these indirect cost should be taken into account by any department embarking in the CFAI accreditation process. During an interview with Chief Ernst Piercy, he was asked if there were any additional costs associated with the CFAI accreditation process. Chief Piercy advised that there were significant indirect costs such as: staff salaries, accreditation manager training, travel expenses, and office supply expenses that should be weighed by departments participating in the accreditation process. These indirect costs that Chief Piercy

spoke about were in stark contrast and virtually non-existent when compared to the estimated cost

that was published by the CFAI during the literature review.

The time required to complete the accreditation process was also a subject worthy of

discussion. The time that an agency must commit to the CFAI accreditation process can have a

profound effect on a department's decision whether or not to participate in this type of process.

Purcell (2005), reported that his department invested more than 600 hours of staff time to

complete accreditation in his department. Likewise, the CFAI (2006), reported that fire service

agency's actively involved in the accreditation process should plan on committing between 700-

1000 hours to complete the process.   However, the results of a nationwide survey of accredited

fire departments revealed that 64% of them expended more than a 1000 hours of staff time to

complete the process. In fact, 34% of the departments who responded to the survey reported that

the accreditation process took in excess of 2,000 hours to complete in their departments. In

addition, an interview with a key fire service professional revealed that the CFAI estimate of

700-1,000 hours was a very conservative approximation. During my interview with Chief

Piercy, he stated his experience with the CFAI fire accreditation process in his department, as

well as, other departments revealed that the estimated average time to complete the accreditation

process was about 1,500 hours.

The difficulties that some department's experienced during the CFAI fire accreditation

process were also important to note. A nationwide survey of accredited departments indicated

that 44% of the respondents reported that they had experienced problems with one or more of the

components in the accreditation process. The standards of cover and the completion of the

planning documents seemed to be of particular trouble for many of the respondents. Likewise,

information that was gained in literature review also seemed to affirm this assertion. Jones

(2007), reported that many fire departments had difficultly completing the self assessment and

planning portions of the accreditation process; which, outline the legal responsibilities and

deployment capabilities of a department. Bruening & Webber (2001), suggested that

departments learn all that they can about accreditation to ensure that they minimize any

difficulties with the different parts of the process.

        Although it is a responsibility of every chief fire officer to ensure that the mission of the

organization is achieved and quality, cost effective services are being provided to its citizens. It

is unfortunate to know that many departments across the country have not yet chosen to

participate in this type of evaluation process. The fire accreditation process should be just

another tool in the fire service's tool box to ensure that effective and efficient services are being

delivered. This type of evaluation method has been proven to offer significant benefits and help

determine resource needs within an agency. This type of process should be a standard that all

fire departments should be required to follow.

        The researcher's interpretation of the study results substantiated his belief that all fire

departments should participate in the CFAI fire accreditation process. Proven evaluation

systems such as this are clearly needed if a fire service organization is to ensure that effective

and efficient services are being provided. I was surprised to learn that this was not a new

concept and that accreditation programs have been part of successful management strategies in

the fire service, as well as, numerous other service delivery organizations for some time.   I was

also saddened to discover that such a large number of departments nationwide have done very

little to improve the delivery of efficient and effective services in their jurisdictions. This was

evidenced by the small number of departments that currently are accredited through the CFAI.

Chief fire officers, as well as, all appointed and elected officials should make participation in the

accreditation program a priority for their jurisdictions; since, this program can enhance

accountability and the service delivery capabilities to the citizens that they serve. I found it

refreshing to see that a small number of departments (121) nationally have taken the lead and

completed the accreditation process within their jurisdictions. These departments have truly

strived for excellence by providing assurance to their peers and the citizens that they serve that

they are a mission driven organization that provides a cost effective/efficient services appropriate

for the demands of the jurisdiction.

The implications of these research findings should be applied to benefit both the citizens

of Anne Arundel County and the members of the Anne Arundel County Fire Department. The

application of new technologies such as the participation in the CFAI fire accreditation process

will help ensure that a detailed evaluation of a department's services is completed and a method

to address deficiencies, as well as, manage growth within our agency/jurisdiction is addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research presented in this study has demonstrated that the CFAI fire accreditation

program is an all encompassing evaluation program that has substantial benefits associated with

the process. Based on this research it is recommended that the Anne Arundel County Fire

Department consider the following recommendations with the goal of conducting an evaluation

of the department's services and the development of a plan to address any deficiencies that are

discovered during the process:

1.   The results of this research should be reviewed with the fire chief and members of

the department's senior staff to compare and contrast the costs, benefits, and difficulties associated with this type of program. This will help to dispel any misconceptions about the accreditation process.

2.   The department should provide an overview of the CAFI fire accreditation program and solicit support for the project from our local elected officials. This would help ensure that there is significant support for the project and the correction of deficiencies that may be discovered.

3.   The department should provide an overview of the CAFI fire accreditation program to all department members including: rank & file personnel; officer grade personnel; mid-level managers; and all associated labor groups. This would ensure that there is stakeholder buy-in and support for the program at all levels of the organization.

4.   The department should ensure that the necessary funding for the project is budgeted for the fiscal year that the program will be initiated. This will ensure that the appropriate funding is in place to begin the evaluation process.

5.   The department should update its standard operating procedures, standards of cover, and other administrative documents that will be utilized during the accreditation process. This will ensure that time appropriated for the accreditation process is used efficiently.

6.   The department should contact other accredited fire departments in the area to build a network of support during the accreditation process.

There are many benefits that the Anne Arundel County Fire Department could derive

through the implementation of these recommendations. First, a systematic process for measuring community risks and accurately evaluating a department's services could be utilized to ensure that the department is providing a level of service that is commensurate with that of our elected officials and citizens. Second, an evaluation process that allows for baseline and bench marking of our services would allow for the correction of deficiencies and the promotion of excellence within our organization. Third, long range strategic planning would be accomplished to ensure that a process to manage growth and maintain an acceptable level of service within our jurisdiction. And fourth, a proven and tested evaluation process that is accepted by our appointed/elected officials would be utilized to ensure that the department is meeting the standards for it industry.

These changes should be implemented in three phases. The first phase should include the review of this information within the department, as well as, all appointed and elected officials (recommendations 1, 2, & 3). The second phase should include the appropriation of the necessary budgeted funds (recommendation 4). This should be implemented immediately after the first phase of the project is completed.   The third implementation phase should be the updating and development of all necessary departmental documents that will be utilized during the accreditation process (recommendations 5). This phase should be accomplished immediately after gaining approval of the project funding and three months prior to the accreditation start date. The last implementation phase (recommendation 6) should occur immediately after all departmental documents have been updated and should be accomplished one month prior to the accreditation start date.

Additional research on this subject should be conducted in an attempt to seek additional

information on the accreditation process in other service organizations. This information can

then be used to enhance the accreditation process within the Anne Arundel County Fire

Department.

It is also suggested that future researchers consider the advances in private sector

businesses practices to seek newer and more innovative ways to accomplish accreditation, as

well as, organizational planning. These new concepts have come to fruition in response to rising

pressures to make private business more viable and competitive in the market place.   Lessons

learned from the private business sector can help ensure that this type of effort will be continued

and that both the citizen and the jurisdiction benefits from an accreditation process where

organizations meet or exceed established standards in their industry.

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APPENDIX "A"
ACCREDITATION SURVEY

DEPARTMENT NAME: _____

TYPE of DEPARTMENT: ❑ Career   ❑ Volunteer   ❑ Combination

POPULATION SERVED:_____   # OF STATIONS_____   # OF PERSONNEL_____

RESPONSE AREA (check all that apply): ❑ Rural   ❑ Suburban   ❑ Urban

SERVICES PROVIDED ([✓] check all that apply): ❑ EMS   ❑ Fire   ❑ All Hazards

1.   Does your department/jurisdiction (County/Municipality) currently hold accreditation certification through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International?
   ❑   Yes   ❑   No   **(If No, Please go to Question # 12)**
2.   How long has your department been in accredited through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International?
   ❑   0-2 years
   ❑   2-5 years
   ❑   6-7 years
   ❑   8 or more years
3.   How long did it take your agency to become accredited after becoming a registered agency through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International?
   ❑   6 mo - 1 year
   ❑   1-2 years
   ❑   2-3 years
   ❑   3 or more years
4.   How many people were involved/assigned to complete the accreditation process on a full time basis?
   ❑   1
   ❑   2
   ❑   3
   ❑   4 or more
5.   What was the estimated number of staff hours devoted to the accreditation process?
   ❑   500
   ❑   1000
   ❑   1500
   ❑   2000 or more
6.   What was the total estimated cost (not including member salaries)that your department incurred to complete the accreditation process through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International?
   ❑   0-$2,500
   ❑ $2,501-$5,000
   ❑ $5,001-$7,500
   ❑ $7,501-$10,000
   ❑ $10,001 or more _____
7.   Who initiated the accreditation process within your department?
   ❑   County Executive/Mayor
   ❑   City Manager/Chief Administrative Officer
                 (PLEASE CONTINUE ON OTHER SIDE)

❏   City/County Council or Board of Commissioners
❏   Fire Chief

8.   Were all of the appointed and elected officials in your community supportive of your participation in the accreditation process ?
❏   Yes   ❏   No

9.   Are other agencies in your jurisdiction (County/Municipality) accredited?
❏   Police
❏   EMS
❏   Dispatch/Communication Center

10.   What benefits has your department seen as a result of achieving accreditation through Commission on Fire Accreditation International?
❏   Improved Response Times
❏   Improved Resource Allocation
❏   Development of a Strategic Plan
❏   Detailed Evaluation of Department Services
❏   Improved Departmental Management
❏   Improved Departmental Efficiency
❏   Increased Funding
❏   Increased Public Approval
❏   No Noticeable Difference

11.   What difficulties did your department experience with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process?
❏   Funding for the program
❏   Lack of support from departmental personnel and/or appointed/elected officials
❏   Lack of staffing to complete the process
❏   Problems with part of the accreditation process: standards of cover, peer review, etc._____
❏   Other

12.   Would you recommend that all Fire Departments work toward achieving accreditation?
❏   Yes   ❏   No

13.   Any additional comments that you may have regarding Fire Department Accreditation:

_____
_____
_____
_____

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME:_____

ADDRESS:_____

PHONE:_____EMAIL:_____

Would you like to receive the results of this survey?
❏   Yes   ❏   No

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey!

APPENDIX "B"

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How long have you been involved in the CFAI fire accreditation process?

2. Can you describe the CFAI fire accreditation process?

3. In your experience, does the fire accreditation process always follow the established steps that are published by the CFAI?

4. Did the accreditation process in your department or any department that you were involved with differ in any way from the description provided by the CFAI?

5. What were some of the indirect costs that you had noted as a result of the fire accreditation process?

6. What is the average total staff hours that must be devoted to complete the CFAI fire accreditation process?

APPENDIX "C"

Nationwide Fire Department Survey Results

Total Surveyed	Total Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
121	88	73%

1. Does your department/jurisdiction (County/Municipality) currently hold accreditation certification through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International?

Yes	88	100%
No	0	0%

2. How long has your department been accredited through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International?

Number of Years	Number of Respondents	Percentage
0-2 years	13	15%
2-5 years	33	38%
6-7 years	23	26%
8 or more years	18	20%

3. How long did it take your agency to become accredited after becoming a registered agency through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International?

Number of Years	Number of Respondents	Percentage
6 months-1 year	19	22%
1-2 years	39	44%
2-3 years	22	25%
3 or more years	9	10%

4. How many people were involved/assigned to complete the accreditation process on a full time basis?

Number of Personnel	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	41	47%
2	11	13%
3	2	2%
4 or more	34	39%

5.   What was the estimated number of staff hours devoted to the accreditation process?

Number of Staff Hours Devoted	Number of Respondents	Percentage
500	8	9%
1000	23	26%
1500	26	30%
2000 or more	30	34%

6.   What was the total estimated cost (not including member salaries) that your department incurred to complete the accreditation process through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International?

Total Costs	Number of Respondents	Percentage
$0-$2,500	6	7%
$2,501-$5,000	16	18%
$5,001-$7,500	32	36%
$7,501-$10,000	18	20%
$10,001 or more	15	17%

7.   Who initiated the accreditation process within your department?

Personnel	Number of Respondents	Percentage
County Executive/Mayor	6	7%
City Manager/Chief Administrative Officer	7	8%
City/County Council or Board of Commissioners	1	1%
Fire Chief	74	84%

8.   Were all of the appointed and elected officials in your community supportive of your participation in the accreditation process?

Yes	83	94%
No	5	6%

9.   Are other agencies in your jurisdiction (County/Municipality) accredited?

Yes	57	65%
No	31	35%

10.   What benefits has your department seen as a result of achieving accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation international?

Type of Result	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Improved Response Times	32	36%
Improved Resource Allocation	42	48%
Development of a Strategic Plan	70	80%
Detailed Evaluation of Department Services	79	90%
Improved Departmental Management	57	65%
Improved Departmental Efficiency	57	65%
Increased Funding	25	28%
Increased Public Approval	45	51%
No Noticeable Difference	2	2%

11.   What difficulties did your department experience with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation process?

Difficulties	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Funding for the program	21	24%
Lack of support from departmental personnel and/or appointed/elected officials	13	15%
Lack of staffing to complete the process	10	11%
Problems with part of the accreditation process: standards of cover, peer review, etc.	26	44%

12.   Would you recommend that all fire departments work toward achieving accreditation?

Yes	74	84%
No	14	16%

13.   Any additional comments on accreditation process:

Additional Comments	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Accreditation is an ongoing process well worth the time and effort	12	14%

APPENDIX "D"

Estimated Costs of Accreditation for the AACO Fire Department

Accreditation Phase	Type of Fee	Cost per Person/Agency	Number of Personnel	Total Costs
Registered Agency Phase	Registration Fee	$350.00	N/A	$350.00
	Accreditation Work Shop Fees	$625.00	4	$2,500.00
Applicant Agency Phase	Accreditation Fee	$8,500.00	N/A	$8,500.00
Accreditation Candidate Phase	Peer Review Inspection	$1,500.00	5	$7,500.00
	Commission Meeting Travel: (Peer Review Team Leader and Two Members of the Department)	$1,500.00	3	$4,500.00
Accredited Department Phase	Annual Fee	$1,700.00	@ 4 years	$6,800.00
Indirect Fees	Travel Expenses for Accreditation Work Shops	$300.00	4	$1,200.00
****	Salary of appointed Accreditation Manager	****$45.00 Hr.	1@ 1500 Hrs	****$67,500.00
	Office Supplies			$5,000.00
Total				$103,850.00
Re-Accreditation Fees	Re-accreditation Fee	$45.00	N/A	$45.00
	Peer Review Inspection for Re-accreditation	$1,500.00	3-5	$7,500.00
Total Accreditation and Re-Accreditation				$111,395.00

(**** Denotes an employees salary that would be paid by the department even if accreditation was not undertaken)